

ELEMENT 912: HOWARD CENTER MASTER PLAN

Phase 1: Report and Recommendations

01 INTRODUCTION

Howard Center, in Cranston, is a 275-acre campus occupied by five major departments and several smaller agencies of state government. In 1989, the General Assembly, by enacting PL 89-153, directed the Statewide Planning Program to undertake a comprehensive study of the Center. The legislative mandate was amended by PL 90-56 and PL 94-426.

The *Report and Recommendations* is a summary of the major issues and a plan for addressing immediate concerns. The State Planning Council, on October 13, 1994, adopted this plan as Element 912 of the State Guide Plan. The plan presents basic findings and recommendations. It constitutes Phase 1 in a four-phase process. Subsequent phases are to provide further technical analyses and feasibility assessments, departments' and agencies' plans and space needs and a determination of those which can be met at Howard Center, and a complete plan for renovations and new development at the Center.

02 ISSUES ADDRESSED

This plan addresses issues related to Howard Center as a physical property, the interaction of the occupant departments and agencies, its relationship with the City of Cranston, and its future role as a site of government functions.

03 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

The plan sets forth the following goals, objectives, and strategies:

GOAL ONE

CREATE A NEW CENTRALIZED STATE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION FOR HOWARD CENTER.

Objectives:

1. Establish, first by executive order and later by legislation, a permanent council of state departments and others with major stakes in the management of Howard Center.

Strategies:

- a. The Howard Council should be a forum for addressing center management issues of mutual concern to its members.

- b. The Howard Council should act as an advisory body, making recommendations on management issues concerning Howard Center to the governor, the legislature, state departments and agencies, and the City of Cranston.
 - c. The Howard Council should be composed, at a minimum, of the directors of Administration (as chair); Children, Youth and Families; Corrections; Human Services; Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals; Substance Abuse; and the Mayor of the City of Cranston.
 - d. Staff support for the Howard Council should be provided by the Office of the Superintendent of Howard Center. Interim staff support should be provided by the Department of Administration (divisions of Planning and Central Services).
 - e. Immediately upon approval of Phase 1 of the Howard Center Master Plan by the State Planning Council, the governor should be asked to issue an executive order establishing an interim Howard Council. The interim council should prepare legislation to establish a permanent council, with a full description of its powers and responsibilities, and this proposed law should be forwarded to the governor for submission to the next session of the General Assembly.
2. Establish the Office of Superintendent of Howard Center as a centralized property management operation.

Strategies:

- a. The Office of Superintendent should be responsible for the property management of shared elements of Howard Center and their operation, including all centralized aspects of the utilities, road system, and grounds. The Office of Superintendent should administer other centralized support services (or the arrangements for such services) that the state chooses to consolidate at Howard Center.
- b. The Office of Superintendent should be responsible for renovation, re-use, and maintenance of all Howard property outside of departmental zones.
- c. Staff of the Office of Superintendent should include the superintendent and additional technical and support personnel. The DOA Division of Planning and Division of Central Services should serve as advisory staff on technical matters.
- d. The Office of Superintendent should be part of the Department of Administration. The Superintendent should report to the chairperson of the Howard Council, who should be the Director of Administration.

- e. The Office of Superintendent should be established, by executive order, following the State Planning Council's approval of Phase 1 of the Howard Center Master Plan. Thereafter, the office, its powers and responsibilities, should be established by a new state law concerning Howard Center management.
3. Complete Phase 2 of the Howard Center Master Plan, the technical analysis and feasibility assessment of the master plan implementation strategies.

Strategies:

- a. Completion of subsequent phases of the Howard Center Master Plan should be the responsibility of the Office of Superintendent.
- b. All subsequent phases of the Howard Center Master Plan should be reviewed and approved by a majority vote of the Howard Council, and then recommended to the State Planning Council for approval.

GOAL TWO

REVITALIZE HOWARD CENTER AS A MULTI-PURPOSE STATE GOVERNMENT COMPLEX.

Objectives:

1. Create departmental districts for each of the major occupants at Howard Center; namely, Children, Youth and Families; Corrections; Human Services; Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals; and Substance Abuse.

Strategies:

- a. Each department should have its own district, within which it would manage its own facilities. Each district should be sufficient in size to accommodate the department's current and projected needs. Each district should have some room for rearranging operations and for future expansion.
- b. Departmental requests for changes of the district boundaries, or for use of facilities outside of the district, or for creation of a district for another department, should be reviewed by the Howard Council, which should make recommendations to the governor.
- c. All departments' capital investment plans for projects at Howard Center should be submitted to the Superintendent for review to ensure compatibility with existing elements of the Center and consistency with the criteria established in the master plan.

2. Create a multi-purpose state government district, under the jurisdiction of the Department of Administration.

Strategies:

- a. All Howard Center land and buildings outside the departmental districts should be considered part of the multi-purpose state government district and should be under the jurisdiction of the Department of Administration.
 - b. The Office of Superintendent should have direct responsibility for management of all property within the multi-purpose state government district.
3. Upgrade the infrastructure to ensure adequate service to present facilities and to support expansion of Howard Center and its occupancy to maximum capacity.

Strategies:

- a. The Howard Council should establish a task force of state officials to compile information about the current systems and their condition, identify alternative solutions to the major problems, and recommend actions to the Council.

The task force should include DCYF, DOC, and MHRH Facilities Management, the State Energy Conservation Officer, the DOA Office of Strategic Planning, the Asset Protection Program Administrator, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Department of Transportation. The task force should be directed by the Superintendent of Howard Center.
 - b. Specialized engineering studies, by state officials or external consultants, may be required in order to develop more detailed information about proposed alternatives.
4. Stabilize, renovate, and re-occupy the vacant and under-utilized buildings for public service uses.

Strategies:

- a. The Council should establish a task force of state officials to prepare a preliminary report on the condition of vacant and underutilized structures, in anticipation of their potential for re-use.

This task force should include DCYF, DOC, and MHRH Facilities Management, the DOA Office of Strategic Planning, the state Building Code Commissioner, and the Administrator of the Asset Protection Program. The task force should be directed by the Superintendent of Howard Center.
- b. All vacant buildings should be properly secured (mothballed) as soon as possible, according to the specifications of the Building Code Commissioner.

- c. Information concerning the land, buildings and utilities should be assembled, organized, and maintained in the Office of Superintendent.
 - d. Specialized architectural and engineering studies of individual structures should be prepared either by the Office of Superintendent or by external consultants, in order to verify conditions and prepare rehabilitation plans and cost estimates.
5. Prepare a specialized master plan for the redevelopment and re-use of the multi-purpose state government district.

Strategies:

- a. A redevelopment plan should be adopted, which aims at full occupancy by a group of compatible uses.
 - b. Potential occupants of the buildings should be identified. First priority should be given to state agencies; but use by the local government, non-profit agencies, and private tenants also should be considered. In any case, the state should retain ownership of the property.
 - c. Complete relocation of existing non-compatible uses from the multi-purpose state government district should be accomplished, and within a certain time limit. Project stages, including the coordination of relocation and renovation timing, should be specified in Phase 4 of this master plan.
 - d. Support services should be centralized, whenever possible, in the new district and, ideally, shared by all occupants of Howard Center. These would include parking, vehicle storage and maintenance, mail service, printing/copying, recycling, etc. The district also could contain franchised amenities such as a cafeteria, child care, a physical fitness center, etc.
6. Plan for optimum use of key undeveloped or underutilized areas within Howard Center as potential future building sites.

Strategies:

- a. Feasibility of development on the potential building sites identified in this report, and elsewhere within Howard Center, should be assessed.
- b. A maximum build-out scenario should be prepared to assist in overall planning for the building and landscape design, as well as planning for future infrastructure needs.

7. Adopt design guidelines for all new development, to encourage an attractive, unified treatment of Howard Center and compatibility of new elements with the traditional building and landscape character and with this master plan.

Strategies:

- a. Design guidelines should apply to all proposed development, including renovations, and to all buildings and landscape features.
- b. Design guidelines should govern primarily the exteriors of the structures and should aim to unify the appearance and functions of the buildings, landscape, and public areas.
- c. Design guidelines should establish general and specific rules governing the major entrances, roads, parking areas, and landscaping; the location and orientation of buildings; the architectural style, dimensions, materials, and colors of structures.
- d. Design guidelines should aim specifically to minimize and mitigate all significant impacts on the private properties and public rights-of-way surrounding Howard Center. The guidelines should establish standards for appropriate buffers, effective screening, control of stormwater, vehicular traffic control, etc.

GOAL THREE

IMPROVE AND FORMALIZE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND THE CITY OF CRANSTON REGARDING HOWARD CENTER.

Objectives:

1. Assemble a master agreement between the state and the city, to document and formalize existing understandings pertaining to Howard Center.

Strategy:

- a. The Howard Council should establish a task force, including the Superintendent and the Mayor of Cranston, to compile and report on all existing agreements and to draft a master document.
2. Establish a formal process whereby the City of Cranston reviews and comments on all proposed development projects at Howard Center that meet certain threshold criteria as to location, scale, intended uses, design, and other potential impacts on the community.

Strategy:

- a. The Council should establish a task force, including the Superintendent and the Mayor of Cranston, to recommend an appropriate review process and related criteria.
3. Give the Mayor of Cranston a permanent seat as a full voting member of the Howard Council, to ensure proper representation of the city's positions concerning Howard Center matters.
4. Minimize and mitigate all significant impacts of Howard Center on the surrounding community.

Strategies:

- a. Design guidelines (see also Goal 2, item 7-b above) should be established to ensure effective buffers, screening, control of stormwater, traffic circulation, control of hazardous emissions, etc.
- b. Decisions on the use of land and buildings on the perimeter of Howard Center should consider their impact on and compatibility with the adjacent neighborhoods.

04 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations emanated from the comprehensive study and are presented in the context of the goals listed above.

GOAL 1:

CREATE NEW CENTRALIZED MECHANISMS FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF HOWARD CENTER

Recommendations:

- a. A Howard Council shall be established as a coordinating body; an interim council by executive order, and a permanent council by law.
- b. A superintendent of Howard Center shall be designated, to pursue Phases 2 and 3 of the Master Plan, implement Council decisions, and manage the reservation.
- c. The duties of the Howard Reservation Advisory Committee, Cranston Community Relations Board, and Howard Complex Advisory Committee shall be reassigned to the new Council.

- d. The Council and Superintendent shall review still-relevant recommendations of the 1990-1993 Comprehensive Study and of other past studies of Howard Center.
- e. Any changes in the use or occupancy of any land or buildings at Howard Center shall be subject to (i) being reported to the Council, if the change is by a department within its own district, or (ii) being approved in advance by the Council, if the change would occur across departmental districts, this procedure being consistent with the "moratorium" in PL 89-153, Section 5.
- f. The Council shall review jurisdictions and current uses of all buildings at Howard Center, and make appropriate recommendations to the Governor per RIGL 37-7-6.
- g. Building names, addresses, and inventory numbers shall be as set forth in the official inventory of state properties, maintained by the Division of Planning in the Department of Administration in accordance with RIGL 37-8.1-2; shall be clearly posted; and shall be used consistently.
- h. The Council shall consider centralizing redundant functions: facilities management; fire, health, safety, and emergency compliance; food services; grounds and road maintenance; laundry; mail and telecommunications; security; storage and warehousing; combined training center; utilities and systems, and vehicle services.
- i. Fiscal and operational analyses of these functions shall be undertaken in order to ascertain economic and organizational feasibility of centralization.
- j. Priority attention shall be given to securing, protecting, and revitalizing the infrastructure and usable buildings, being the thrust of Goal 2, below.
- k. The governor shall be respectfully requested to issue an executive order creating an interim council, authorizing the office of the superintendent, and directing initiation of the actions enumerated in c through j above.

GOAL 2:

REVITALIZE HOWARD CENTER AS A MULTI-PURPOSE STATE GOVERNMENT COMPLEX

Recommendations:

- a. Howard Center shall continue to host the state's major institutions, and also shall become a multi-use government services complex.
- b. The property shall be completely surveyed, and a new and reliable base map shall be produced.

- c. A comprehensive use/re-use plan for all usable Howard buildings, with asset protection and capital investment provisions, shall be developed.
- d. Departmental districts and a multi-purpose state government district shall be delineated.
- e. Fire protection systems and procedures and a center-wide security function shall be ensured.
- f. "Caps" shall be considered as a means of restraining growth of major populations at Howard.
- g. Controls to limit major new construction within Howard Center shall be devised.
- h. Future construction of major new institutions shall be sited elsewhere.
- i. Architectural and engineering studies of vacant/abandoned buildings shall be undertaken.
- j. The following functional relocations and sitings shall proceed as soon as possible:
 - (1) the MHRH/IMH Forensic Unit shall be relocated from Pinel [#97] to be integral with Adolph Meyer [#50];
 - (2) the DOC Men's Work Release Unit shall be relocated from Bernadette [#48] to one or more community-based sites;
 - (3) the DOC Marshals shall be relocated from the cottage [#45] to another appropriate site;
 - (4) a multi-departmental training and conference center shall be established in the "L" building [#100]; and
 - (5) separate departmental headquarters buildings shall be provided for DOC, DHS, MHRH, and DSA; feasibility of same for DCYF shall be further considered.
- k. Use/re-use and rehabilitation plans shall include statutory and code compliance and shall adhere to applicable accreditation standards.
- l. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission shall be requested to establish a historic district at Howard; environmental and historic preservation considerations shall be factors in planned uses of land and buildings.
- m. The feasibility of the MHRH/GH providing broad-based medical care of varied Howard-based populations shall be explored.

- n. Selected state agencies now leasing private space elsewhere shall be moved into renovated Howard buildings, with colocation of compatible agencies, to achieve significant long-range savings.
- o. Infrastructure and systems, especially power plant and water, shall be replaced or rehabilitated; new infrastructure map(s) shall be produced.
- p. Capital development at Howard Center, and the funding thereof, shall be consolidated by the Howard Council.
- q. Subsidiary long-range Howard occupancy plans, including inter-departmental agreements, are to be developed by each of the major occupant departments: DCYF, DHS, DOC, DSA, and MHRH.

GOAL 3:

RECOGNIZE AND SYSTEMATIZE THE ROLE OF THE CITY OF CRANSTON AT HOWARD CENTER

Recommendations:

- a. The Mayor of Cranston shall have a position on the Howard Council.
- b. State and city shall strive for consistency in the Howard Center Master Plan and Howard-related issues addressed in the Cranston Comprehensive Plan.
- c. Extent or limits of the city's jurisdiction (such as zoning and building codes) over Howard shall be reaffirmed.
- d. City services at Howard (police, fire, rescue, sewers, etc.) shall be reviewed.
- e. Appropriate compensation for city services shall be considered.
- f. A master state-city agreement shall be codified, to contain all existing and future stipulations concerning Howard.
- g. The City of Cranston shall have standing to comment on any plans affecting further development at Howard.